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Letter dated 7 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter from Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the President of the Security Council, concerning the recent Eritrean military attack against my country (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Elfatih **Erwa**
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 7 October 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

On Thursday, 3 October 2002, on a 180-kilometre-long front along the Sudan's boundary with Eritrea, the Sudanese border areas and towns in eight locations (namely Udi, Hamashkorayb, Rasay, Yarmuk, Shalalub, Kashdar, Kashday and Kabrit) came under coordinated and simultaneous ground attack from inside Eritrean territory with intense artillery support from the Eritrean side.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) rebel movement announced from Asmara, Eritrea's capital, that the attack had taken place, and it issued a warning to the inhabitants of Kassala, capital of Kassala province, which is close to the border with Eritrea, to evacuate the town within 24 hours.

We have ascertained in a manner that leaves no room for doubt that the core of the attacking force was provided by the Eritrean army, and we cite hereunder some of the evidence that would prove this.

(a) That the attack and intense bombardment took place along a 180-kilometre front confirms the involvement of the Eritrean forces in an offensive that would have required the capacities of a State, such as the rebel movement does not have at its disposal. The areas attacked, moreover, are located directly along the boundaries and are only accessible from inside Eritrean territory.

(b) The artillery bombardment supporting the offensive operations came from inside Eritrean territory and was carried out by Eritrean gun crews.

(c) The attacking forces were recruited, assembled and trained inside Eritrean territory and under the supervision of Eritrean commanders.

(d) Supplies, including ammunition, fuel, provisions and combat matériel, were brought from inside Eritrea.

(e) The attacking forces went so far as to remove all the bodies of those members of the Eritrean forces who were killed in front of the defensive positions.

(f) The prisoners taken acknowledged that Eritrean forces had participated in the attack.

It would not have been possible for the rebel movement to launch this wanton and unwarranted large-scale aggression without powerful and direct backing from the State of Eritrea, which supported the attack with artillery fire from deep inside Eritrean territory, provided military supplies, financing, mobility and communications to the SPLA rebels and furnished the media platform the rebel movement used to announce the attack and warn civilians in Kassala to evacuate the town before it attacked and plundered it.

The Sudan has always had the highest degree of self-restraint and patience in the face of Eritrea's bad faith and abuses. The latter are exemplified in numerous manifestations of aggression, not the least of which is its sponsorship of the Sudanese armed opposition and the fact that it provides it with the means of engaging in propaganda and advocacy activities. The Sudan has not ceased to make

sincere, sustained and untiring efforts to establish a basis for normal, good-neighbourly relations. The leadership of the Eritrean regime, with odd and incomprehensible insistence, has nevertheless persisted in its misguided conduct and its contempt for the principles of good-neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence and the peaceful settlement of disputes, all of which are firmly established and permanently enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of the African Union and the norms of international law.

We wish in this context to draw your kind attention to the fact that this aggression comes at a time when concerted efforts are being made, internally in the Sudan and at the regional and international levels, to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement to the domestic conflict in the Sudan and when there are renewed and revived hopes of an early peace. This has met with acclaim and encouragement from your distinguished Council. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which embraces — as well as the Sudan — Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti, Somalia and Eritrea, is the mechanism through which the States of the region have agreed to strengthen cooperation and settle any disputes that may erupt. With the other IGAD countries, the Sudan has made efforts to achieve peace in Somalia in parallel with the other regional efforts in central Africa. We are sorry to say in this regard that Eritrea has not only constantly absented itself from these efforts in general but has indeed endeavoured to undermine them with its previous and ongoing hostile actions and with this current, fresh aggression.

The Sudan has made strenuous efforts at every level to normalize its relations with the Eritrean regime. These have included visits to Eritrea by officials at the top of the executive and political branches and the signing of various agreements and understandings. The response to all this from the Eritrean side was, however, disappointing, in that the Eritrean regime chose open hostility instead of friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness. Some examples of this are its involvement in the training of rebel movement elements and in providing them with a safe haven. The opposition has made Asmara a centre for its political and diplomatic activities and a base for its leadership and its official spokesman.

Eritrean support for the rebels includes the following:

(a) Basic and specialist training conducted at Eritrea's Sawa camp, where a force of recruits brought from southern Sudan was trained between 18 January and 19 May 2002 and where John Garang watched the graduation ceremony for this rebel force, and the training of naval forces at the port of Massawa in September 2001;

(b) Provision of safe havens, inasmuch as there are camps for SPLA forces and the so-called Beja Congress and Alliance forces inside Eritrean territory in the Rabdah, Qarmayka, Ayla Abd Allah, Tamrat, Village 13, Sawa, Umm Humaymi, Asray, Hailat Arabi and Humayb areas;

(c) Provision of combat supplies from inside Eritrean territory using Eritrean carts and trucks;

(d) Provision of drugs and treatment of patients at the field hospital in Eritrea's Rabdah area, with some cases being referred to Asmara and Teseney hospitals;

(e) Artillery support provided from inside Eritrean territory and by Eritrean guns when rebels engage in hostilities against Sudanese armed forces stationed at border posts;

(f) Hosting of opposition conferences, as is the case with the periodic meetings of the so-called National Democratic Alliance in Asmara and the Beja Congress meeting that was held in the Sawa area last September with Eritrean participation;

(g) Hosting of rebel field commanders and opposition leaders and the facilitation of field visits to their forces and assignment of Eritrean officials to escort them;

(h) Assignment of coordinators from Eritrean security to monitor and supervise the activities of the Sudanese opposition in the eastern and Red Sea regions;

(i) Settlement of disputes among the various opposition factions, most recently the problem that arose between veterans and new recruits in the ranks of the rebel movement in August 2002;

(j) Use by rebel forces of roads inside Eritrean territory for all sector-to-sector movements;

(k) Assistance in transporting rebel forces by air from southern Sudan into Eritrean territory and in their reception at Eritrean airfields;

(l) Maintenance of vehicles and carts belonging to the rebels in Eritrean workshops by Eritrean mechanics and workers.

Given our international responsibilities and our commitment to security and peace in this strategically important region of the world, we have constantly kept you and the members of your distinguished Council informed of the acts of aggression being committed by the Eritrean regime against my country and against its security and stability and of the fact that it is targeting civilian and economic installations and civilian persons in the border area. By its latest aggression, Eritrea is only proving that it cares nothing for security, stability and peace in the region.

With its unstinting support for an outlaw military movement that uses violence as a means to achieve political objectives and seeks to target civilians, civilian installations and economic infrastructure, the Eritrean regime is aligning itself with the forces that support international terrorism and is, frustratingly, displaying open indifference for and unresponsiveness to the current international trend towards cooperation on enhanced measures to eliminate international terrorism and the invocation of international legality in conflict resolution with a view to promoting peace, good-neighbourliness and cooperation.

The Eritrean regime, which is governed by a unilateralist and absolutist mind set, has today become a source of instability in the region of the Horn of Africa owing to its predilection for aggression and military adventures, not only against the Sudan but also against all of Eritrea's neighbours in Ethiopia, Yemen and Djibouti. This would account for its growing regional and international isolation.

At a time when Eritrea's aggression against my country is continuing, the Sudan affirms its natural and legal right to defend its territory, its citizens and its installations, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the

United Nations, in order to ensure that aggression is repulsed. The Sudan affirms its strong commitment to the principles of collective international security. It is this that has motivated it to bring the matter to your attention, as has been its custom in the past, and to ask the distinguished Council to require the Eritrean regime to meet its responsibility, as a Member of the United Nations, to preserve peace and security in the region. It also asks the distinguished Council to discharge its responsibilities, as stipulated in the Charter, with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security in this important region of the world and to take all measures necessary to ensure that this goal is achieved.

(*Signed*) Mustafa Osman **Ismail**
Minister for Foreign Affairs